

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-11

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 IO-13 ISO-00 SSM-03 HA-05 NEAE-00
CIAE-00 DODE-00 NSAE-00 NSCE-00 SSO-00 IC AE-00
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FM AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 3001
INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN
AMEMBASSY BEIRUT
AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
AMEMBASSY JIDDA
AMEMBASSY LONDON
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AMCONSUL JERUSALEM
USMISSION USUN NY
USMISSION SINAI

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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: PEPR, IS, US
SUBJECT: ISRAELI ASSESSMENT OF BEGIN TRIP TO US

REF: A) TEL AVIV 5948, B) TEL AVIV 5782

1. SUMMARY: THE PRESS AS WELL AS MK'S WITH WHOM WE HAVE
SPOKEN ARE IN AGREEMENT THAT THE BEGIN TRIP HIGHLIGHTED
IMPROVED ATMOSPHERICS IN US-ISRAELI RELATIONS, BUT DID NOT
RESULT IN ANY NARROWING OF THE GAP BETWEEN US AND ISRAELI
OFFICIAL PERCEPTIONS. NOR DID NAY KIND OF BREAKTHROUGH ON
NEGOTIATIONS OCCUR. BEGIN CONTINUES TO BE CRITICIZED FOR
HIS OVERLY OPTIMISTIC PRONOUNCEMENTS. THE FOCUS OF NEGOTIATIONS
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IS NOW ON THE FUTURE STATUS OF THE WEST BANK, FOLOWING DAYAN'S
"INITIATIVE" IN WASHINGTON. THE ARMS PACKAGE DEBATE AND
CONGRESSIONAL REACTIONS TO IT CONTINUE TO DOMINATE PRESS
COVERAGE. END SUMMARY.

2. REACTIONS TO BEGIN'S VISIT TO THE US ARE CRYSTALLIZING
INTO AN INITIAL PRESS ASSESSMENT WHICH IS AT ONCE SKEPTICAL

AND UPBEAT. THERE IS UNUSUALLY WIDESPREAD AGREEMENT ON THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE VISIT, THOUGH MOST OBSERVERS CAUTION THAT A FINAL JUDGMENT SHOULD NOT BE PASSED UNTIL BEGIN DELIVERS HIS OWN SUMMATION.

3. SEVERAL OF THE THEMES WHICH WERE FIRST SOUNDED IN REPORTS FROM CORRESPONDENTS (REFTELS) ACCOMPANYING BEGIN'S (AND DAYAN'S) PARTY ARE BEING JOINED TOGETHER IN THIS CONSENSUS ASSESSMENT. THERE IS AGREEMENT THAT THE ATMOSPHERE IN WHICH US-ISRAELI RELATIONS ARE BEING CONDUCTED HAS IMPROVED SINCE BEGIN'S LAST VISIT TO WASHINGTON. IN PART THIS IS SEEN TO DERIVE FROM THE NATURE OF THE OCCASION-CELEBRATION OF ISRAEL'S INDEPENDENCE; IT IS ALSO THE RESULT OF "COLD CALCULATION AND ADVANCE PLANNING" (HAARETZ) ON THE PART OF AMERICAN POLICY MAKERS WHO ARE ANXIOUS TO PREVENT ANY UNNECESSARY HARDENING OF ISRAELI OPINION. BEGIN IS SEEN TO HAVE ERRED, HOWEVER, IN CONFUSING CEREMONY WITH SUBSTANCE, AND THE PRESS UNANIMOUSLY WARNS THE PUBLIC AGAINST THE SAME MISTAKE. BEGIN CONTINUES TO BE CRITICIZED IN THE OPPOSITION PRESS FOR HIS OVERLY OPTIMISTIC PRONOUNCEMENTS, BUT MOST PAPERS SEEM WILLING TO FORGIVE THE PRIME MINISTER HIS WELL-KNOWN AND VERY HUMAN FAILING.

4. IN ADDITION TO SKEPTICISM THAT ANY REAL IMPROVEMENT IN US-ISRAELI RELATIONS HAS OCCURRED, THERE IS LITTLE HOPE EXPRESSED OF ANY IMMINENT NEGOTIATIONS PROGRESS. NEVER-LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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THELESS, THERE IS A GREAT DEAL OF SPECULATION OVER "DAYAN'S INITIATIVE," AND WHAT IT AUGURS FOR THE PEACE PROGRESS. IN THE VIEW OF MOST PRESS COMMENTATORS THE GOVERNMENT MUST (ON DAYAN'S RETURN) DISCUSS AND DECIDE ON HOW TO REPLY TO THE AMERICAN QUERIES REGARDING THE ULTIMATE DISPOSITION OF THE WEST BANK. HAARETZ CAUTIONS THAT THE ADOPTION OF DAYAN'S PROPOSAL FOR THE NEGOTIATION OF THE SUBSTANTIVE ISSUES RATHER THAN A FORMULATION OF A DECLARATION OF PRINCIPLES BY NO MEANS GUARANTEES PROGRESS TOWARDS A SETTLEMENT: "IT WOULD BE UNREALISTIC TO BELIEVE THAT CONFLICTING VIEWS WOULD AUTOMATICALLY VANISH THE MOMENT BOTH PARTIES AGREED TO FIND A COMMON LANGUAGE NOT ON THE LEVEL OF PRINCIPLES BUT ON PRACTICAL ARRANGEMENTS."

5. THESE ASPECTS OF THE BEGIN VISIT ARE ALREADY BEING OVERSHADOWED BY THE ARMS PACKAGE QUESTION AS PRESS FOCUS IS SHIFTED TO CAPITOL HILL FROM THE WHITE HOUSE. A FINAL VERDICT ON BEGIN'S TRIP WILL BE IN LARGE PART COLORED BY THE EVENTUAL OUTCOME OF THE ARMS DEBATE.

6. FINALLY, THERE IS A DEEP SENSE OF SATISFACTION OVER THE DEMONSTRATION BY AMERICAN JEWRY OF ITS CONTINUING SOLIDARITY

WITH ISRAEL, AS EXPRESSED IN THE VARIOUS INDEPENDENCE DAY CELEBRATIONS ATTENDED BY PRIME MINISTER BEGIN. ALTHOUGH OBSERVERS NOTE THAT SUCH OUTPOURINGS OF SUPPORT DO NOT NECESSARILY INDICATE THE EXTENT OF THE AMERICAN JEWISH COMMUNITY'S IDENTIFICATION WITH ISRAELI GOVERNMENT POLICY, ANY AND ALL EVIDENCE OF CONTINUED SUPPORT FROM OVERSEAS IS WELCOME, INDEED CHERISHED HERE. HOWEVER, AS THE JERUSALEM POST CAUTIONED, "BEGIN'S AMERICAN STOCK HAS HAD NOWHERE TO GO BUT UP." THE POST ALSO EXPRESSED SOME IRRITATION OVER BEGIN'S CONTINUOUS ADMONITION TO HIS ISRAELI AND AMERICAN JEWISH CRITICS THAT HEY HOLD THEIR PEACE AND LET THE GOVERNMENT OF ISRAEL WORK OUT THE COUNTRY'S DESTINY AND HIS CHARGE THAT SUCH CRITICISM ONLY WEAKENS THE HAND OF THE NEGOTIATORS. SUCH COMMENTS, ACCORDING LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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TO THE POST EDITORS WILL NOT SET WELL EITHER WITH AMERICAN JEWRY OR AN INCREASINGLY CRITICAL PUBLIC AT HOME. SIMILAR COMMENTS WERE ALSO VOICED BY HAARETZ. LEWIS

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